



NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. AQUACULTURE A BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY, USDA REPORTS **2005 Aquaculture Census Shows Significant Growth**

Richmond, Virginia, Oct. 3, 2006 – Aquaculture production is a billion-dollar industry, with sales of fish, shellfish and related products growing by 11.7 percent over the past seven years, according to results of the 2005 Census of Aquaculture.

The 2005 count was the second nationwide aquaculture census conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The first took place in 1998. Results show that between 1998 and 2005, U.S. sales of aquaculture products grew from \$978 million to nearly \$1.1 billion. Virginia was a significant contributor to that growth, with aquaculture sales increasing 66 percent, to \$40.9 million.

Census results show that food fish – including catfish, perch, salmon, hybrid striped bass, tilapia and trout – accounted for 62 percent of all aquaculture sales in 2005. Mollusks – including abalone, clams, mussels and oysters – comprised 19 percent of 2005 sales. Crustaceans, such as lobsters and shrimp, and ornamental fish, such as koi and tropical fish, each accounted for approximately 5 percent of sales. They were followed by baitfish at 4 percent and sport fish at 2 percent.

Mississippi led the nation in sales of aquaculture products, with nearly \$250 million dollars in 2005. Arkansas, Alabama and Louisiana were the other states with sales topping \$100 million. Louisiana had the largest number of aquaculture farms. The state's 873 farms were more than double the number in any other state.

Virginia saw a 158 percent increase in mollusk sales compared to the 1998 Census of Aquaculture. The number of mollusk farms in Virginia increased from 33 to 53 farms statewide. Even though Virginia saw a decrease in fresh and salt water farms, saltwater farm acres increased from 4,299 acres in 1998 to 12,412 acres.

The 2005 Census of Aquaculture collected detailed information on issues including production methods, water sources, sales, distribution and farm labor. For the purpose of the census, an aquaculture farm was any commercial or non-commercial place from which \$1,000 or more of aquaculture products were raised and sold, or distributed for restoration, conservation or recreational purposes during the census year.

Complete results of the 2005 Census of Aquaculture, including Virginia-specific data, are available online at: www.nass.usda.gov/aquaculture/.

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